

**Political History Collection  
Interview H.0014.01 : Tape 1**

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**Interviewed by:** Melvyn Goldstein and Tashi Tsering  
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**Gender:** Male  
**Age:** 62  
**Date of Birth:** 1931

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## **Abstract**

Gyentsen Tempel [Tib. rgyal mtshan bstan 'phel] was a monk official from the shagtsang of Jigyab Khembo Gyambumgang. He later became a tsendrön in the Dalai Lama's Secretariat. In this interview, he discusses the negotiations between Tibet and China and the Tibetan people's reactions to the idea of communism. He also discusses the traditional decision-making process, the People's Association, and the two differing views on how to deal with the Chinese. He talks about the Khamba's revolt, the lack of foreign support for Tibet, his trip to China, and how his thinking began to change. He also describes the new system that was installed in Tibet.

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## **Tape 1**

**Q:** I interviewed you once about your coming to Yadong. You were from the shagtsang of Gyambumgang [Tib. rje 'bum sgang], right?

**A:** Yes. In the old society, my gegen had taken up big responsibilities in the old government.

**Q:** Wasn't he the jigjab khembo?

**A:** Gyambumgang was the name of the place and since our house was located there, we got that name. He was called Gyambumgang Jigyab Khembo.

**Q:** In the past, he was the drunyichemmo, and later he became the jigjab khembo, right?

**A:** Yes. He also was the nendrön for a long time. During the regency, the nendrön was an important position. After that, he became the drunyichemmo and then, during the present Dalai Lama, he became the jigjab khembo for almost three years. After he resigned, the late Lobsang Samden la [Tib. blo bzang bsam gtan lags], the elder brother of the Dalai Lama, became the jigjab khembo.

**Q:** In August 1951, the Dalai Lama and Zhang Jingwu went back to Lhasa, and you also went with him. What happened after you went to Lhasa? What work did you do? What did you hear about the events?

**A:** The reason the Dalai Lama went to Yadong was that we were receiving many announcements [Tib. 'bod brda] from the Central Committee about the peaceful liberation of Tibet. And they called us to come down to [Beijing] to hold negotiations. At that time, Geshe Sherab Gyatso [Tib. dge bshes shes rab rgya mtsho] and Getag Trülku [Tib. dge stag sprul sku] were also calling us [making broadcasts]. But at that time, the government was consistently saying that Tibet was independent, and there was no talk about any unification.

After that, the People's Liberation Army arrived in Chamdo. Ngabö was the doji, and my gegen (teacher) was the drunyichemmo. [In Lhasa] They were holding the party for the Yigtsang [Tib. yig tshang spro chen] in the Tsidrung Linga [park] where the [Chinese] regiment was built. On that day, the kalön were invited to the party. Then they suddenly received a telegram from down there [Chamdo]. The Englishman, Sir Ford, was sending telegrams back and forth. At that time, the Gadrung, Tsögo [Tib. mtsho sgo], sent the telegram and Gadrung Dumra [Tib. ldu m ra] went to receive the telegram [in Lhasa]. The telegram said that the People's Liberation Army had taken Chamdo, so what should we do? Dumra said that he couldn't report it right then because the kalön were at the party. So Tsögo was agitated and scolded him saying, "Screw their shitty party!" [laughter]. It was our

[household's] turn to host the party. The party was given by the different drunyichemmo in turn. So I heard about this.

After Ngabö was arrested, meetings were held here internally, and it kind of lost its effectiveness [Tib. nus pa med pa]. Although I was not working in the administration at that time, what I heard was that they [the government] talked with the Indian government and said, "We are going to retaliate consistently against the Chinese and we are not going to stay idle. But since our strength is weak and we have a small population, we will probably lose [our] effectiveness. So when that happens, the political power holders, like the Dalai Lama and the regent Taktra [Tib. chos yon gnyis], will have come to India. So please send us a plane." The Indian government said that this would be okay and a small air strip was made in Tsesumthang [Tib. tshes gsum thang] in Lhasa. Later, when it became kind of urgent to ask the Indian government for help, Nehru said, "We have become friendly with the new China. We are very sorry we cannot help." [laughter].

**Q:** They [refused], making a salutation [Hin. sa lam Tib. zhus], right?

**A:** Yes, they did. [laughter]. Therefore, we became helpless, and they talked back and forth in the meetings. Finally, they came to a conclusion regarding the Dalai Lama going to a foreign country, saying that since the Dalai Lama only had some [experience] with religious matters, but he didn't have political experience and we didn't have the power, the plan for going to India would not work out. But it was not okay to stay idle like this because the People's Liberation Army was coming up. So the Dalai Lama should stay in Yadong, which is not beyond the border. He was to watch how the situation progressed, and if the need arose, he would cross the border into India. I heard that they made this decision. My gegen was the jigjab khembo.

**Q:** At that time, had you joined the government service?

**A:** I was already a tsendrön and I was among the tsendrön going to Yadong. This was in the 11th Tibetan month. I don't remember the date. The Dalai Lama left at night, at around 2-3 a.m. Tibetan time. When we got to the Trisam [Tib. khri zam] Bridge, we could recognize the people. The Dalai Lama stayed in Chumbi [Tib. chu 'bi] for some time, and then it was said that the place was not really that good and he stayed at Dunggar [Tib. dung dkar] Monastery. Mr. Ford was there, but he couldn't connect the telegram with China. So we didn't know about the situation down there. In the meanwhile, Wang Qimei talked with Ngabö about the peace negotiations.

[Note: Tsendrön Gyentsen Tempel, talking in general about what he heard about the peace talks and sending the delegation]

We only heard about the peace talks from the radio, and many meetings were held, but there weren't any decisions made. Some said that we should take the Dalai Lama out. And some said that since the Dalai Lama was young and there was a little bit of Buddhism in Burma, but that in India, there was not much Buddhism, there was not much [of an] advantage to leaving [for India]. At that time, in the 17-Point Agreement, there was the thing called Gungtung Kangling, or the Common Program [Ch. gong tong gang ling]. So people were wondering what that would be. Actually, there were a few people who knew Chinese, like Yabshi's bridegroom, Jebula [Ch. jie fu Tib. lags] [the Dalai Lama's brother-in-law]. But people didn't understand the meaning of Gungtung Kangling and said this was a very dark thing. There was a lot of trouble.

[Note: Tsendrön Gyentsen Tempel, talking in general about the arrival of Zhang Jingwu and the People's Liberation Army wanting the grain supply, etc.]

After the Dalai Lama came back [from Yadong], he couldn't implement the Agreement right away.

**Q:** After you came back, what work did you do? What were the people in Lhasa thinking about, and what were the people and your friends saying?

**A:** Tibet was kind of a remote place, and we didn't have many relations with foreign countries. So everyone was saying that the Communists were eating human beings. People were very frightened. Then, it was also said that the Communists didn't have a religion. In Tibet, everyone had deep faith in religion, and we had a profound religion. You can see that in our history. So people were very suspicious of that, saying that the Communists didn't have religion and that the king should really rule according to religion [Tib. rgyal po chos bzhi byed pa].

At that time, there were some educated people, but there were not many educated people. So they didn't know about politics very much, and it was very rare to find people who knew the history of Tibet regarding its relations with China. The reason why Tibet had the priest-patron relationship with China was because the emperor himself was practicing religion and they invited the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama and the other high lamas as their root gurus, and they had great respect for the lamas. So they had a close relationship. Since they had a similar viewpoint on religion, it worked out well. It was said that Marxism and Leninism didn't allow religion, and the Tibetan people had great faith in religion, so people were wondering what would happen. Otherwise, they didn't have many suspicions of their politics. At that time, the government didn't have any power, and the People's Liberation Army had already arrived. So Ngabö went there and had to sign the Agreement.

**Q:** At that time, what work were you doing?

**A:** I was a tsendrön working in the Secretariat of the Dalai Lama, the gaa [Tib. 'gag]. It was like an aide serving the guests. There were 14-15 tsendrön. The head was Drönyerchemmo Phala Thubden Wönden [Tib. pha lha thub bstan 'od ldan]. According to the religious system, they didn't allow lay people to meet the Dalai Lama indiscriminately. At that time, there were lay people, like sweepers and cushion keepers, but they were not allowed to go inside, so we would take the things in. When the Dalai Lama would hold religious activities, we also had to prepare some things, like making an agenda, and so on. This was made in the gaa and we would submit the plans there. According to the old system, they would hold ceremonies, and when the Dalai Lama would hold religious activities, the monk and lay officials would attend. And we would have to look over the discipline, like the way they were to dress and all of their activities. The gaa had the power to oversee all of these things.

**Q:** Every day you would hold the morning tea ceremony, the drungja, right?

**A:** Yes. All of the monk officials had to attend the drungja and the morning tea would be served and the Dalai Lama would give them an audience.

**Q:** About one month after you came back to Lhasa, the General Assembly [Tib. tshogs 'du rgyas 'dzoms] was held regarding whether you should accept the 17-Point Agreement or not. Did you attend the meeting?

**Q:** The General Assembly was not held. At that time, the people who signed the Agreement, and the kalön and the drungtsi, held meetings separately. There was also a meeting called the Intermediate Size National Assembly [Tib. hrag bsdus rgyas pa], where the representatives of the three great monasteries and all the monks and lay officials would attend. Normally, when the Kashag could not make a decision, they would consult the drungtsi, and if the drungtsi could not make the decision, they would call the Intermediate Size National Assembly.

**Q:** At that time, who was the representative from the tsendrön?

**A:** I was not the representative, and I don't remember who it was.

**Q:** Was Thubden Rigchog [Tib. thub bstan rig mchog] there?

**A:** No, he wasn't. I can ask somebody who he was. What I remember was that after Ngabö came up, a meeting was held in Tsidrung Linga where all the monks and lay officials were called and Ngabö explained from beginning to end how the Agreement was signed, how Commander-in-Chief Wang [Ch. wang si ling] advised him, he how reported to the government, and how he signed the Agreement about the Tashilhunpo trouble, etcetera.

**Q:** Do you remember the month?

**A:** It was in the 7th month when he [Dalai Lama] came back.

**Q:** It was in August when he came back?

**A:** So this was the 6th Tibetan month. It was not long after that. It was about a month after that when the meeting was held.

**Q:** At that time, the two sitsab were strongly against the coming of the People's Liberation Army, supplying the grain to the People's Liberation Army, and the acceptance of the Agreement. What would the tsidrung have thought at that time? What was their viewpoint toward the sitsab?

**A:** [laughter] People were kind of carefree [Tib. ba re bo re] and kind of didn't really understand [the situation]. As I mentioned before, people didn't have that much standard of knowledge [Tib. chu tshad]. People had all sorts of reckless thoughts. I heard that at one time, some tsidrung made an association [Tib. tshogs pa], but I didn't attend it. On top of the Jokhang, some tsidrung gathered together, and they kind of supported the two sitsab on the matter of the People's Liberation Army. But they were not effective, and they didn't submit letters to the Central Committee. I heard that they met and kind of created a public opinion [Tib. gleng phyogs].

**Q:** Who was the head of the meeting?

**A:** I heard that there were some young monk officials, like Yingön Yeshe Targye [Tib. dbyings mgon ye shes dar rgyas].

**Q:** What was your thinking at that time? You belonged to the middle standard among the tsidrung in terms of rank. What did you think?

**A:** I was 30 years old. For about 20 years, I had learned some writing, but I had spent most of my time as a servant. When I was 20 years old, I became a tsidrung. I was related to my gegen and I was working as a servant. Later, I became the heir of the shagtsang household. This was the monk's system. I was not a kudrak, so they didn't call me Awa [Tib. a wa] [term for the kudrak's children]. So I didn't have much of a standard of knowledge, except that I knew a little bit of writing. Actually, I should have known the history of Tibet, but I didn't have that kind of standard either. As I mentioned before, I was just blindly guessing [Tib. rmongs tshod] about the situation. We were there at the end of the 13th Dalai Lama. After the death of the [13th] Dalai Lama, during the two regents, Reting and Taktra, Tibet maintained its right of self-determination.

[Note: Tsendrön Gyentsen Tempel was talking in general about Chinese history from the fall of the Manchu until the Guomindang, and about the foreign countries having representatives in Lhasa].

At that time, to tell you the truth, the main thing was that when the Chinese came to Tibet and I heard that they would harm religion, I had deep faith in religion, so even if I couldn't practice the real dharma, if they [Chinese] were to get rid of the places where we made religious offerings, people's lifespans were not long, and after we died, if it would be like a brick that had been broken, then it would not be okay. And if we had to be reborn in the six realms of the Samsara, that would be very difficult. At that time, I was thinking like this, and other people were also thinking in this way and talking like this.

After that, the Central Committee treated us very well and sent us to present of the tribute [Tib. rten 'bul], and for a tour to China.

**Q:** Was that in 1954?

**A:** This was in 1952. It was the first time [tour]. I was with Liushar [Tib. sne'u shar] and those people.

**Q:** In what month did you go down?

**A:** It was in the 5th month.

**Q:** At that time, had the sitsab been demoted?

**A:** No, they hadn't been demoted.

**Q:** Had the People's Association started yet?

**A:** There were several so-called People's Associations, right?

**Q:** I mean the first one.

**A:** The first one probably had started. The People's Association was saying that Tibet was a poor country with a small population so, "If you send so many officers and soldiers from the People's Liberation Army, it would harm the people's livelihood. So you, the People's Liberation Army officers and soldiers, please go back." I don't know the full content of the petition, but this was the main point.

**Q:** Those people, like Kamika Chöndze [Tib. dkar me khang] and Thamjō Sonam [Tib. dam chos bsod nams] were monks like chandzō [in the monastery] and not real tsidrun. Did you know them? Did you have relations with them?

**A:** I knew Thamjō Sonam a little bit. He stayed in Lhasa.

**Q:** I think he stayed in Tsomönling [Tib. tshe smon gling], right?

**A:** Yes, he was a member of the Sera Jamtsül's [Tib. byams tshul] monk household.

**Q:** How old was he at that time?

**A:** He was probably about 60.

**Q:** Was he married?

**A:** Yes, he had a wife.

**Q:** How did he make his living?

**A:** He was good at writing [in] Tibetan. He was probably working on writing some things.

**Q:** Did he do trading?

**A:** I don't think so.

**Q:** What kind of person was he—like his character and so on?

**A:** I don't have much to tell you about this. He was a very hard-headed man, always thinking [about the] earlier times. [laughter]. He was the person saying that it would not be okay if the ancient system didn't exist, and if the system from the three great Tibetan dharma kings [Tib. chos rgyal mes dpon rnam gsum] and those things, and the great lamas who came in succession, were to [be ended], Tibet would get nothing. He held this kind of ideology.

**Q:** Did he tell you to join their association?

**A:** [laughter] No, he didn't say anything like this. At that time, they didn't have a wide kind of relations, and they were kind of keeping it a secret. There were not many people in that group. I also knew about that later on.

**Q:** When do you mean, later when?

**A:** When they submitted the petition to the Work Committee [Ch. gongwei]. They told the Local Government and the Local Government arrested them. So then I knew about that.

**Q:** At that time, had your gegen, the jigjab khembo, resigned? Or was he the jigjab khembo then?

**A:** My gegen resigned from the jigjab khembo post at the end of 1952.

**Q:** Then he was there at that time?

**A:** He probably was.

**Q:** At that time, there were two paths when many Chinese soldiers came. One was to have a strong idea, thinking it would be good to oppose them. The other one was to think that there was no use in fighting, and that it would be good to act tactfully, in a friendly way. What was the thinking of the jigjab khembo?

**A:** When the 17-Point Agreement was signed, for the time being, the situation became disgusting [Tib. skyug bro po]. We didn't get any support from foreign countries. We tried to do something with India, but they let us down.

**Q:** Then you were very discouraged, right?

**A:** Yes, we were very much discouraged because the Indians not only let us down, but when we were staying in Yadong, there were the places, like Sikkim and Bhutan, which were part of India. Even those people didn't dare to make many relations with us. Otherwise, we used to have good relations in terms of religion. I was there, so according to my viewpoint, they didn't dare to make relations. At that time, there was the Sikkim Prince and the heads of the Bhutan, but it didn't look good in terms of our relations because they were apprehensive.

**Q:** They didn't come to visit, right?

**A:** No, they didn't come often because they were apprehensive.

**Q:** But at that time, the People's Association rose up very strongly, right?

**A:** If I tell you clearly, I heard that the reason why Nehru treated Tibet like that was that he just gave up on Tibet. Though we shared religion and culture connections with India, they should have helped us because we were also neighbors. This was what I thought at that time, not now. Be careful not to make mistakes. What Nehru had done was in the past. The Europeans had invaded the Asian countries, and now the new China had risen and become powerful. So he thought that all the Asian countries should unite and challenge the Europeans. Since he basically had this mentality, he made relations with China. I heard this from some educated people.

**Q:** You heard this at the time, right?

**A:** Yes, I heard that this was his ideology.

**Q:** You are right. This is what Nehru thought.

**Q:** Tashi Tsering: At that time, when the People's Association submitted the petition, the Chinese built sand bunkers in Kytopa's [Tib. skyid stod pa] house, Sandutsang's [Tib. sa 'du tshang] house, and Yuthok's house. I too have seen that. So at that time, it was a tense situation and people thought there would be fighting. What was your opinion then? Where were you then?

**A:** Yes, the Chinese held their Propaganda Office [Ch. xuan chuan bu] in Sandutsang's house. In the beginning, the Work Committee was held in Trimon, but later they moved it to Yuthok's. I just heard that when the later People's Association went there, they shouted. There was nothing like all the people making a commotion. Some people who were said to be representatives of the people went there, but at that time, I didn't see them going. I just heard about this later on. There was nothing widespread done. As for the Central Committee, usually, they were very cautious.

**Q:** It was like the proverb, "The Chinese are ruined by suspicion and Tibetans are ruined by hope [Tib. rgya dwogs pa/ bod re ba]," right?

**A:** Yes, you are right. People were also saying this. So they might have done that. And they [Chinese] might have thought that when the People's Association did something to that extent, there would be strength behind it. On the other hand, compared to the Tibetan people's point of view in terms of religion, they didn't have the standard of knowledge or kind of loyalty towards religion and Tibet, right? [laughter]. So the Chinese might have been cautious. When the two sitsab were [demoted], there was a lot of talk and trouble. Zhang Jingwu was kind of drastic [Tib. dza drag po], and also aggressive, and he talked strongly. So when he said something intense—the main trouble was that he said that he was going to hoist the [Chinese] flag on the Potala. The two sitsab said it would not be okay to hoist the flag on the Potala because of the religious activities and other things. When Zhang Jingwu said something intense, Lukhangwa said, "Even if I got beheaded, I wouldn't let you hoist the flag on the Potala." [laughter].

**Q:** Did the Chinese say that they would hoist the flag on October 1st, their National Day? Or did they say that they would hoist it regularly?

**A:** They said they were going to hoist it regularly.

**Q:** Tashi Tsering: Yes, I saw the flag hoisted on the higher part of the Potala regularly.

**A:** Lukhangwa was a person who was very tough or stubborn [Tib. ka li gseg la bsnyal]. Not only in that matter, but they also didn't get along in other matters. So the Central Committee told the Dalai Lama that it would not be okay for him to leave the sitsab there, and he granted their resignation.

**Q:** Anyway, they were demoted, right?

**A:** I should say demoted in a mild way. At that time, I was near the Dalai Lama, and one morning, they came.

**Q:** Tell me about this in detail.

**A:** The Dalai Lama granted them an audience in his room. They offered some gifts to the Dalai Lama and the Dalai Lama gave them khata scarfs. Then they resigned from their duty.

**Q:** At that time, didn't they serve tea and droma dresi?

**A:** Yes, tea and droma dresi were served in the room in the Potala and they sat down on cushions.

**Q:** Tashi Tsering: Did they do that during the drungja?

**A:** No, he granted the audience in his room separately.

**Q:** At that time, did all the people feel kind of sad?

**A:** To tell you the truth, the Tibetan people didn't have much of a standard of knowledge, so all people were saying that the sitsab were working for the Tibetans, but that the Chinese bullied them.

**Q:** They were showing disappointment, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** When you looked at the sitsab's face, what kind of attitude did they show? Did they kind of show anger?

**A:** To tell you the truth, there wasn't anything like this. The Dalai Lama had told them confidentially, "If you keep on doing your duty—many things are happening between [the Tibetan government] and the Central Committee. So for the time being [Tib. gnas skabs ring], it would be better if you resigned from this duty."

**Q:** The Dalai Lama had told them this before the audience, right?

**A:** Yes, they were told this separately, before that.

**Q:** After that, you went to China, right? How was that trip and what was your viewpoint? How many people were there in a team?

**A:** At that time, all of us were officials of the old government. There were probably about 30-some odd people, including the tribute group [Tib. rten 'bul tshogs pa] and the visiting/sightseeing group [Tib. Ita skor tshogs pa]. The Central Committee allowed each of us to take one servant. So altogether, there were 60-something people.

**Q:** This was when Liushar went, right?

**A:** Yes. It was a very elaborate tour.

**Q:** Was Kapshöba there with you?

**A:** No. The heads were Liushar and Dingja [Tib. lding bya], the fat old man.

**Q:** Tashi Tsering: He was the father of Kungyurla [Tib. kun 'gyur lags], right?

**A:** Yes, and the head of the visiting group was the younger Tregang [Tib. bkras khang], Khenjung Thubden Samjo [Tib. thub bstan bsam mchog]. And the lay official was Mentöpa [Tib. sman stod pa], the one who died recently.

**Q:** We all know that Tibet was backward and it was your first trip to China, so were you surprised very much?

**A:** Yes. We were treated very nicely.

**Q:** No, I mean were you surprised when you saw China?

**A:** [laughter] I was very much surprised. Compared to our small country, when I arrived in Chengdu, it was kind of amazing. When we went down to Xian and Beijing, those places were much, much bigger. When I came up to Chengdu, I had the feeling that Chengdu was slightly bigger. This was because we had never been to other places and we just stayed in Lhasa all the time.

**Q:** It was your first time traveling by train, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** I wonder if you flew in a plane at that time?

**A:** I think I didn't.

**Q:** It must have been the first time you sat in a car?

**A:** It was the first time I sat in a car, but I had seen cars. There were cars in Lhasa.

**Q:** Compared to Tibet, it was kind of amazing, but as we know, the Central Committee wanted you to see that China was good. Among the visiting group, some might have thought it was really good, and some might have thought that they were showing you all the good things and that this was just to show the Tibetan people [that China was good]. What did you think?

**A:** As for this matter, regardless of having these thoughts or not, I was brought to many places for the tour. Except Xinjiang, and Kunming in Yunnan, I got to see most of the big cities, like Shanghai and Hangzhou. At that time, we always traveled by train, and so the train would go through the rural areas. We also saw the situation in the rural areas. It was the time of the democratic reform in China in 1952.

During the Guomindang period, China was poor, and the miser were very poor. At that time, they couldn't just do great things right away, so we would see many beggars in the rural areas, and the rural areas were very poor. Therefore, I thought that although there were great things in the urban areas, the rural areas were poorer than Tibet. Among the visiting groups, there were many kudrak who had been to foreign countries, though I haven't been there myself.

**Q:** What did they say?

**A:** For example, Dingja had been to the school [in England], and there were also some others.

**Q:** Shatra [Tib. bshad sgra] was probably there too.

**A:** Liushar and some of the tribute group also came in a plane, via the foreign countries. They said that although China was a big country, it was dirty compared with foreign countries. Since our Lhasa was small and not developed, we saw China as something good. They said that compared to other foreign countries, it was nothing.

**Q:** When you went for the visiting tour, did you wear the chupa and the boots of the old society?

**A:** Yes, we did.

**Q:** Did you have long hair?

**A:** Most of the lay officials had long hair, but they braided their hair in two braids in a Kongpo hair style [Tib. kong skra] and wrapped it around their heads. At that time, the lay official Driyü [Tib. 'bri yul] had his hair cut off and they had many discussions about that.

**Q:** Did they say that he liked the Chinese too much and he cut off his hair?

**A:** Yes, [laughter] they would say that.

**Q:** Did you wear the satin chupa? You probably wore the ordinary chupa, chubchen [Tib. phyu chen], right?

**A:** On October 1st, National Day, we wore the uniform of the old society, but usually they wore chubchen.

**Q:** The chubchen was made from serge, right?

**A:** Yes, at that time, there were not many Tibetans, except for a few in Beijing and Chongqing, all of them were kudrak and wearing good clothes.

**Q:** They [lay officials] were wearing golden earrings [Tib. sog byil], right?

**A:** Yes. [laughter] So some said that we were Japanese and some said, "No, they are Tibetans," and in the beginning they would crowd around and look at us. In 1954, I went to China again with the Dalai Lama. During those two years, there were people [more frequently] going there, so they were not attentive of us.

**Q:** You went to China in 1951; when did you come back? Was it in 1953?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Altogether, how many months did it take?

**A:** It probably took almost a year. We went to many places.

**Q:** After you got back to Lhasa, did you make a report to the government, or what did you have to do?

**A:** The main thing was that we made a summary document [Tib. phyogs sdom yi ge] about visiting China in which we wrote what kind of viewpoints or opinions we had of China. At that time, we made a book of the summary document in Beijing. There was nothing after we came back to Lhasa, except that they now gave parties. According to the PRC custom, they would give a lot of parties. [laughter]

**Q:** When you came back, did you have a feeling that there was a big change in Lhasa? I mean, compared to the time when you went down.

**A:** There were a lot of changes. When the People's Liberation Army came to Tibet, it had been written in the 17-Point Agreement that we should start the democratic reforms, right? And the Dalai Lama attended the First National People's Congress in 1954, and it was confirmed [that we should] set up the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region. So when I was working in that, the principle of the 17-Point Agreement was to implement the reforms from up to down [Tib. 'go nas 'og]. Otherwise, the reform was done from below to upwards. As for Tibet, it was special in that the reforms should be done from the top downwards. Except some of the Local Government officials working in the private offices of government, all of the officials of the Local Government were forced to join the Preparatory Committee, and they [Chinese] paid their salary. This was arranged by the [Tibetan] government itself. I also was a Vice Section Leader [Ch. fu ke zhang] of the General Affairs Section [Ch. zong wu ke] of the General Office [Ch. ban gong ting] of the Preparatory Committee.

[TN Note: At this point, Dr. Goldstein told Tashi Tsering in English, "He probably didn't understand my question and gave me the answer about the changes [that] took place in Tibet in general. So please ask him again about what he saw, the changes that had taken place in Tibet during his one year tour in China." But, Tashi Tsering also didn't understand what Dr. Goldstein said and asked Gyentsen Tempel the following question.]

**Q:** Tashi Tsering: You stayed in China for about a year, right? And you had seen many things, like developments in all aspects in China. After you came back, what kind of feeling did you have?

**A:** When I came back, I thought that there were many ways of developing politics, but that Tibet had been very stupid in the past.

**Q:** What kind of stupid do you mean? Do you mean with the political system?

**A:** Yes, with the political system, and also the economic system. We were backward.

**Q:** In short, you mean the way of the Local Government governed politics, right?

**A:** Yes, it still remained in the feudal society. We were bound that we should not degrade the good old system [Tib. sngar srol bzang po nyams med]. In the past, probably, the 13th Dalai Lama was a person who understood and thought quickly [Tib. klad pa bsir po], and he thought that since the world was advancing, it would not be okay if we kept on [with] the feudal system, and I heard that he put forward many methods, but the majority of the people had an attachment to the ancient system. So that was an influence on the reform work. The three great monasteries, especially, were saying that if the reforms were done, it would harm the religion. This was because the three great monasteries had been given many monastic estates, so they were saying that if the monastic estates were taken back, even though the Dalai Lama is the religious leader and he could do something, it would still have an influence. This caused a lot of trouble for the Dalai Lama. Like this, we were stupid and idiotic and unable to implement reforms. At that time, I was thinking that we were backward, but I also thought that since the Communists didn't have religion and Tibet was a place for practicing the dharma, our ideology was not compatible. This was really what I thought at that time. Otherwise, I thought that the Chinese way of governing politics and the economy was good.

**Q:** Tashi Tsering: Your point is that after seeing the things in China for one year, you thought the Chinese way of political governing was good, but with religion, it was incompatible, right?

**A:** The reason why I had those kinds of thoughts was because I had worked in the Tibet Autonomous Region with the Chinese cadres for several years. At that time, they were very good. For example, the soldiers and the cadres had good discipline. Now it is not like that. It is absolutely turned inside out. In terms of thinking about their work, between the Chinese cadres who were working in the Tibet Autonomous Region then and the present Chinese cadres, it is absolutely different.

**Q:** Tashi Tsering: At that time, if they didn't behave well, they didn't get power, right?

**A:** At that time, I was the Vice Section Leader of the General Affairs Section. Since the General Affairs Section would deal with economics like holding meetings and paying salaries, so there was a large amount of money coming there. When they gave parties, they would transport a lot of things from China. When they sold some of the expired things cheaply, the Chinese cadres would not come at first. Now, the Chinese cadres were jumping over to get even 1 fen.

**Q:** When did you first get that job?

**A:** It was the time when the Preparatory Committee was set up in 1956.

**Q:** What work did you do when you came back from China until you got this job?

**A:** I was a tsendrön of the Local Government. There wasn't much time between that because I went to China when the Dalai Lama went to attend the National People's Congress. The Dalai Lama stayed in a place called Yuhe Qiao.

After that, probably in 1957, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama went for the Buddha Jayanti [note: they went in late 1956] in India. Although I was not there, I heard that they used that occasion—and Shakabpa and Khenjung Lobsang Gyentsen set up the Dedön Tshogpa [Tib. bde don tshogs pa] in Kalimpong, and they told a lot of things to Zhou Enlai. In Lhasa, the three great monasteries submitted many petitions [Tib. zhu tho] to the Work Committee [Ch. xizang gongwei]. Finally, when the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama came back, Ngabö didn't return, but went to China with Zhou Enlai.

After that, an order came from China saying the reforms had been postponed for 6 years, but after that, the revolt took place [laughter]. As I mentioned, before, the Chinese cadres were really good in 1956. Now I came to know that at that time, the policy of Chairman Mao and the discipline then was strict, and they would also have a livelihood discussion meeting [Tib. 'tsho ba'i gros sdur] every week where their conduct was checked.

**Q:** At that time, how much of a salary did you get?

**A:** For the vice section leader [position], we got 276 dayan per month, and the section leaders got 312 dayan. Now, I also think that one of the reasons that I thought the Chinese cadres were good then was because the Tibetan way of governing was very narrow-minded, and we were talking about the good ancient customs, and it was kind of conservative. So when we saw what other people were doing, we thought that was good. This was our thinking from time to time. But I also think the Open Door Policy was indispensable because if you are tight both inside and outside, people can't let the scope of their minds widen. In some places, the mechanical development was good, but even now there are many things that are lacking.

**Q:** When you were working in the General Affairs Section, who was your boss who decided things, and what were you actually doing then?

**A:** Whatever was decided, we had to ask the General Office up there. We belonged to the General Office.

**Q:** Was that the General Office of the Tibet Autonomous Region?

**Q:** Yes, it was the Secretary's [Ch. mi shu] General Office, and the secretary was Tsögo. And under that, there were 4 sections: the Editing and Translation section [Tib. rtom sgyur; Ch. ke], the Clerk section [Tib. drung yig; Ch. ke], the General Affairs section, and the Accountant section [Tib. rtsis pa; Ch. ke].



**Q:** At that time, from the Local Government side, Tsögo was the secretary, right?

**A:** From the Chinese side, the secretary was the ex-director of the United Front [Ch. tong zhan bu zhang], and later he was a director in the National People's Congress. I forget his name. At one time, he also made a mistake and he had to attend a study session.

**Q:** Wasn't he Li Zuomin?

**A:** No.

**Q:** So the main decision was made [by] the General Office, right?

**A:** Yes. In our section there was one section leader and three vice section leaders. The section leader was Sumdo, Gyentsen Yönden [Tib. gsum mdo, rgyal mtshan yon tan]. Under him was the late Shölkang's son Tse Dorje [Tib. tshe dor rje], who belonged to the Labrang, and there was a Chinese. At that time, we didn't understand [know] much about regular work because the work was widespread and we didn't have the mental understanding. So the main responsibilities were taken by the Chinese.

**Q:** Was the [a] Chinese also the Vice Section Leader?

**A:** Yes. We would just put the seals on the documents. We would try to do writing for the people using Tibetan writing. We also would make deals regarding [buying] the houses and the parks. Buying things and paying salaries.

**Q:** When you had to pay salary, did you have to first take the money?

**A:** Yes. We would take the money from the bank and hand it over to many departments [Ch. chu] of the Tibet Autonomous Region such as the Culture [Tib. rig gzhung] Department and the Hygiene [Tib. 'phrod bsten] Department, and we would pay a salary to the cadres in our General Office. At that time, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were also in the General Office.

**Q:** Did you ever have to pay a salary to the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama?

**A:** Yes, we would go to pay their salaries.

**Q:** Did you have to deliver the one thousand dayan boxes by car?

**A:** The Dalai Lama had 7 dayan less than a one thousand dayan box, and the Panchen Lama had a little bit less than that.

**Q:** Did you have to deliver it monthly?

**A:** We would deliver it to the Dalai Lama's treasury, the dzöbu [Tib. mdzod sbug]. Who knows whether the Dalai Lama was aware of this. [laughter]

**Q:** To whom did you deliver the Panchen Lama's salary?

**A:** The Labrang officials would deliver it.

**Q:** At that time, there was a second People's Association. Do you remember those troubles?

**A:** When the Dalai Lama came back from China and arrived at Ya'an, there were 5-6 people there, and when we asked them who they were, they said that they were representatives of the people.

**Q:** Who was there at that time?

**A:** There was Alo Chöndze, Bisu [Tib. spel zur], Shelkar Chandzö, and there were also representatives of the three great monasteries. At that time, we had come from China, and the Dalai Lama was in the inner room and we were eating in the next room. According to the ancient system, those people didn't eat there saying, "We should never do anything like this," and they went down there [unclear]. Those people were kind of funny. [laughter]

**Q:** After you came to Lhasa, Alo Chöndze and those people caused a little bit [of a] disturbance. Do you remember this?

**A:** I didn't see them doing it at that time. Later, after we came back, I heard that they did something in the Work Committee, and later they were arrested at the police station. At that time, the Central Committee kind of scolded or criticized the Local Government.

**Q:** How long did you work as the Vice Section Leader?

**A:** I worked until 1959, until the revolt took place. I was doing both the job of a tsendrön and also of the Vice Section Leader. Since the Dalai Lama was the director [Ch. zhu ren], when he would attend meetings, I would serve him tea and do other things.

**Q:** When the Khambas came, there were many meetings held. Did you attend those meetings where they said that they had to eliminate the Khambas?

**A:** I didn't attend the meetings, but I heard that probably in the Reform Office (Tib. Lekjö Legung [Tib. legs bcos las khungs]'s rooms in the Jokhang, a meeting was convened to discuss "Alleviating the Central Committee's anger and quelling the Khamba's disturbance [Tib. krung dbyang dgongs pa dwangs thabs dang khams pa'i zing cha 'jags thabs]". I wasn't there, as I was in Tsang.

When there were many Khamba disturbances, the Tibet Work Committee sent many urgent orders to the Kashag telling them to quell the Khamba's trouble and that it was not okay to have these disturbances. At this time, the government sent edicts along with people like me to the various dzong and estates, telling the Khambas not to do that. The edict was from the Kashag with its seal. It said, "The Khambas have started a disturbance, and if you keep on doing this, the Work Committee will scold us a lot. So it is not at all okay for you to stay like this. So you better get scattered or separated. If the Khambas hand in their arms to us, we will not investigate their past deeds and will not punish them."

**Q:** Were you sent to deliver the edict?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Who was with you?

**A:** Drangtöba [Tib. 'brang stod pa] and I took the edict.

**Q:** Where did you go to deliver the edict?

**A:** The two of us were sent to the Tsang area. In Lhoka, Namseling and Tregang Khenjung [Samjo la] went with these. Also, Tsadora Tsendrön Champa Tendar [Tib. tsha rdor ba byams pa bstan dar] and Shöl Khensur Shabdöba [Tib. zhol mkhan zur zhabs sdod pa], who used to be a tsendrön and later lost his celibacy and became a lay fifth rank letsenpa [Tib. las tshan pa], were sent to the north (to Chang).

**Q:** Was there a group sent to Kham?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Was that in 1958? Was that the same time when Namseling was sent?

**Q:** Yes, this was in 1958. At this time, the Dalai Lama was staying in Ganden. So we went for an audience with the Dalai Lama at Ganden. This was like a departure audience [Tib. thon phyag], though we should have done the departure at the gaa, we had to have an audience in Ganden. So we went there.

**Q:** At that time, did the Dalai Lama give you any instructions?

**A:** He said, "Your work is very dangerous, so be careful. If you meet the Chinese, they will think you are Khambas, and if you meet the Khambas, they will think you are working for the Chinese. It is very dangerous, so be careful."

**Q:** What was your main responsibility?

**A:** It was to distribute the edicts to the dzongs, and secondly, if we met the Khambas, we were to educate them.

**Q:** Was the edict from the Kashag?

**A:** Yes, it had the Kashag seal on it.

**Q:** Where were you to take the edicts?

**A:** To all the dzongs in Tsang. The meeting at the Jokhang took place after I had left for Tsang.

**Q:** What did the various dzongpön [Tib. rdzong dpon] say?

**A:** We were assigned to deliver the edicts to cover the areas under the Tsangji [Tib. gtsang spyi] [the governor-geneeral of all of Tsang]. But there weren't any Khambas in Tsang.

**Q:** The Tsangji then was Minkyilinga [Tib. smon skyid gling pa], right?

**A:** Yes, but he wasn't in Shigatse then. The two Shigatse Jidzong [Tib. spyi rdzong], Dosur [Tib. mdo zur] and Tsendrön Thubden Tsempel [Tib. thub bstan tshe 'phel], were there. When we arrived in Shigatse, we met the two jidzong. First, we gave the letters to them, and then they sent them to the other dzongs. We also sent a kind of order [Tib. shul gdam] to the various dzong saying, "We have arrived here in Shigatse to have discussions with the Khambas, so if there are any Khambas in your area, send them to Shigatse to discuss [things]." So for a while, we stayed in Shigatse.

At this time, Nehru visited Bhutan through Tibet. So from here, Surkhang, Tan Guansan and Lhamön [Tib. lha smon] went to visit Nehru. Then, on the way back from meeting him [in Yadong], they came to Shigatse. At this time, the Khambas went through Chushul [Tib. chu shul], Nyemo [Tib. snye mo], and Wuyug [Tib. 'od yug] to Shang Ganden Chöngor [Tib. shangs dga' ldan chos 'khor] to get guns. All the weapons of a Tibetan Government's regiment were stored in there. After the regiment was eliminated, their weapons were stored there.

When we went from Lhasa to Shigatse, we went in a car from the [Tibet] Work Committee. At this time, the United Front Office had given us letters of introduction for the road. We went by car to Wuyug. When we arrived there, the Khambas had just left the day before after taking the guns from the monastery. But it was said that some of them would come that day. It was not certain. Chape [Tib. chab spel] was in the car with us as he was going back to Shigatse with his wife and his daughter, who is now a broadcaster. So we stayed in Wuyug for a while, since in Wuyug, the officials said that some Khambas would be coming again. At this time, 1-2 cars didn't go [alone], but convoys of 60-70 went together, and in each car there were two drivers. Each had guns, but one drove and the other went on foot in the hills as the sentry. When we arrived at Wuyug, the Khambas had killed Dunggar [Tib. dung dkar]

Monastery's steward and destroyed their car, and the private car of a Phari trader had also been destroyed. They thought it was a Chinese car. I saw this myself. I heard that they destroyed many Chinese vehicles and killed many people, but before dawn, everything was taken away.

**Q:** Were you afraid when you were in Wuyug?

**A:** Yes, I was very afraid. Drangtöba was so scared that he was walking in the hills. But if he went in the hills, he would be left behind, so I had to scold him saying, "What the hell are you doing, [acting] like a crazy person? What are you going to do in the hills, and what is the use of going into the hills?" Chape suggested that now we should only go in a car that was all Tibetan and that we should not mix with the Chinese. [laughter] This was his method.

**Q:** But, you didn't meet the Khambas, right?

**Q:** We didn't see any Khambas. They had already gone to Nyemo. So we returned to Shigatse, and on the way we stayed one night at the Takdruka [Tib. stag gru kha] ferry site, and then we went to Shigatse. We stayed in Shigatse for 29 days.

**Q:** I heard that there was a famous speech Surkhang made in Shigatse after returning from Yadong?

**A:** Yes, I was planning to talk about this. I went to meet Surkhang when I got to Shigatse and reported to him what the Khambas had done. At this time, he said, "You two coming here is good. Tan Guansan is scolding me and bothering me. I feel like I'm being hit by nettles [Tib. zwa pos ldag]. So, you two go to Tan Guansan and report what you are doing." So we went right away to Tan Guansan. He was staying in a guest house of the Shigatse People's Liberation Army troops. I told him about leaving Lhasa and Ngabö's advice and coming to Tsang, etc. He got furious and stood up and pounded the table with his fist and said, "You people from the Local Government are the same in the past, present, and future as you do one thing in front and do something else in the back. And now you people are also talking [saying] the same thing, that you were sent purposely to the Khambas because there are problems. What did they [Tibet Government] tell you? Did they say to get connected with the Khambas? Instead of telling me about this—what the hell are you talking about, the Central Committee?". He meant to say that we told him about the United Front Office who gave us the introduction letter and so on. Then he said, "The Khambas have taken so many weapons, how could this situation come to be?" I said, "We don't know. We came here frightened of the Khambas." Tan was very angry that day. He would get up and sit [back down] and bang the table. [laughter] I was a Tibet Autonomous Region official, so I knew the translator, Baba Lobsang Tsültrim [Tib. blo bzang bkra shis], who later became the Party Secretary [Ch. shu ji] when I was in prison. He gave us a sign to leave [since Tan was so angry]. So we left, but Tan Guansan came after us scolding us outside. We left quickly, without even looking back while he was yelling. This was about noon. Surkhang was in the next building, but he could most likely hear the yelling. He had told Tan Guansan that the two of us were sent by the Kashag and we would report to him.

**Q:** Was Surkhang there when you two were scolded?

**A:** No, he was in the other room.

**Q:** Even if you wanted to say something, you didn't know Chinese, right?

**A:** We didn't know Chinese, but there was the interpreter, Lobsang Tsültrim. We went there about noon, and that evening, Lobsang Tsültrim, the translator, came by car saying that Tan Guansan wanted to see you.

**Q:** When you were scolded, what did you think? Were you a little bit scared?

**Q:** No, I wasn't that scared because the situation was not that tense. The Local Government was still there and the society was also there, right? [laughter]. I just thought that he was very angry because the Khambas took the weapons.

**Q:** Tashi Tsering: You are right, because at that time, the two governments were still there, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** What happened when you went there again?

**A:** We went there and he said, "Tell me again everything you said at noon." [laughter] And I told him again. That's why I said that Tan Guansan was drastic. The way he talked was very strong and militant [Tib. drag po].

**Q:** Because he was a military officer, right?

**A:** Yes, probably, Lobsang Tsültrim told him that I was a cadre in the Preparatory Committee. Anyway, he said, "What do you two plan to do?" Our work from the Kashag was to distribute the edicts if we met the Khambas in Shigatse, and if there were no Khambas in Shigatse, we had to go Gyantse. We had been told that there were Khambas in Nangkartse [Tib. snang dkar rtse], and it was likely they would come through Gyantse. So we were told to wait in Gyantse, and we planned to go to Gyantse. Tan Guansan said, "Don't go to Gyantse. Tomorrow return to Lhasa with me." So we just had to say yes.

**Q:** Had his anger subsided a little bit then?

**A:** His anger had probably subsided a little bit. At the end he said, "You are a cadre of the Preparatory Committee, and Drangtöba is my old friend." [laughter] Then we prepared to return to Lhasa and we went to see Surkhang.